

VZCZCXYZ0001
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #2523/01 3270917
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 230917Z NOV 07
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7440
INFO RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7466
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 8755

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 002523

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - NIDA EMMONS
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. TAIWAN POLICY

Summary: News coverage of Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies November 22-23 focused on a speech by Taiwan Representative to the U.S. Joseph Wu at Johns Hopkins University November 20, in which he said Taiwan that understands the U.S. has no obligation to defend Taiwan under the Taiwan Relations Act. The arrangements for ballot issuance at the upcoming legislative elections also attracted much press attention as the central government and pan-Blue local governments disputed over whose plan will infringe voters' right to a secret vote. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a commentary in the pro-unification "United Daily News" said Joseph Wu's statement was inappropriate. An editorial of the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" said the U.S. should support Taiwan more by selling F-16 C/D jet fighters and negotiating a bilateral free trade agreement. End summary.

A) "Joseph Wu Overstates and Helps to 'Set the Americans Free'"

Washington correspondent Vincent Chang of the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] wrote in a commentary (11/22):

".... In fact, even though the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) does not provide that the U.S. must 'fight for Taiwan,' it does not say the U.S. 'will not fight for Taiwan.'

".... It is clear then that drafters of the TRA had left significant flexibility and discretion between the lines for the U.S. President and Congress. Whether the Americans will fight for Taiwan is to be determined by the U.S. rather than by the Taiwan side. One cannot complain if the Americans refuse to recognize this obligation. But for a Taiwan Representative to 'help set the Americans free' on this issue is really unthinkable."

B) "U.S. Security Needs Democratic Taiwan"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (11/22):

"We support the call by the United States-China Economic and Security Commission (USCC) on the U.S. Congress to encourage President George W. Bush's administration to assist Taiwan maintain its defenses against a rising military threat by the People's Republic of China.

".... However, current U.S. policy toward Taiwan remains sadly dominated by decision makers who advocate 'pre-emptive intervention' and wage war for oil or other resources against weak dictatorships under the banner of 'freedom' (mainly for business), but quickly 'turn the other cheek' and appease Beijing's dictatorship by trying to restrain Taiwan's democratic procedures, such as the upcoming referendum on whether to join the United Nations under the name of 'Taiwan.'

"Washington has also made no effort to engage in negotiations, much

less sign, a free trade agreement with Taiwan which would help our economy build deeper linkages with the advanced U.S. market instead of exacerbating our dependence on the PRC's uncertain roller-coaster economy.

"After demanding that Taiwan display its willingness to build the capacity to defend itself against PRC annexation, the Bush administration has refused to agree to sell upgraded F-16 C/D jet fighters, even after the opposition dominated Legislature agreed to fund the procurement after heavy lobbying by the Democratic Progressive Party government.

"These trends have placed Taiwan in a disadvantageous position relative to the PRC and exacerbated the difficulty in defending our hard-won democracy against external intimidation by the PRC and pro-unificationist forces at home. Taiwan is already overly integrated into the PRC orbit to the extent that our political as well as economic autonomy is eroding due to the pervasive impact of vested business interests.

"... In contrast to the rigidity shown by U.S. external policy in recent years, the PRC has been considerably more adroit and flexible in manipulating cross-strait relations, gaining the initiative in Sino-American ties and turning Washington from the defender of global democracy into a proto-accomplice in suppressing global human rights in the name of 'anti-terrorism' and curbing democracy in Taiwan, thus undermining the morale of democratic forces in 'greater China' and Asia as well.

"Bewitched by a narrow conception of U.S. 'national interests' that highlights 'anti-terrorism' and an imperial hubris that denigrates the importance of genuine democracy in world politics, the current U.S. administration has been willfully blind to the structural change in the balance of power in the Taiwan Strait in recent years in favor of the PRC, which it foolishly sees as an 'ally' in the

'war against terror.' ..."

YOUNG